RUNE et al
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AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

1. (Cancelled)

2. (Currently Amended) The method of claim ~~1~~4, further comprising:

determining from a cell identifier for the specified cell whether the specified cell is a valid cell;

~~sending a response message from the second control node to the first control node;~~ and

further comprising including in the response message an indication that the specified cell is not a valid cell.

3. (Cancelled)

4. (Currently Amended) For use in a radio access network having a first control node which controls a first set of base stations and a second control node which controls a second set of base stations, each base station serving a cell, a method comprising:

transmitting cell information from the second control node to the first control node only when the cell information is not already known by the first control node, the cell information including a set of cell information parameters characterizing a specified cell served by a base station controlled by the second control node;

sending a request message from the first control node to the second control node, the request message including a cell identifier for the specified cell;

sending a response message from the second control node to the first control node;

including in the response message both (1) the cell information deemed current by the second control node for the specified cell; and (2) an index which is representative of the cell information deemed current by the second control node for the specified cell; and

~~The method of claim 3,~~ wherein the index is of a shorter length than the cell information.

5. (Currently Amended) For use in a radio access network having a first control node which controls a first set of base stations and a second control node which controls a second set of base stations, each base station serving a cell, a method comprising:

transmitting cell information from the second control node to the first control node only when the cell information is not already known by the first control node, the cell information including a set of cell information parameters characterizing a specified cell served by a base station controlled by the second control node;

sending a request message from the first control node to the second control node, the request message including a cell identifier for the specified cell;

sending a response message from the second control node to the first control node;

including in the response message both (1) the cell information deemed current by the second control node for the specified cell; and (2) an index which is representative of the cell information deemed current by the second control node for the specified cell; and

~~The method of claim 3, further comprising~~ forming the index as a counter whose value is changed when configuration data of the specified cell is changed.

6. (Currently Amended) The method of claim ~~3~~4, wherein the request message requests that the second control node allocate resources in the specified cell for a connection controlled by the first control node.

7. (Original) The method of claim 6, wherein the request message is one of a radio link setup request message and a radio link addition request message.

8. (Cancelled) The method of claim 3, wherein the request message requests retrieval of cell information for the specified cell from the second control node.

9. (Cancelled) The method of claim 1, further comprising:

sending a request message from the first control node to the second control node; and

including in the request message an index which is representative of the cell information deemed current by the first control node for the specified cell.

10. (Currently Amended) For use in a radio access network having a first control node which controls a first set of base stations and a second control node which controls a second set of base stations, each base station serving a cell, a method comprising:

transmitting cell information from the second control node to the first control node only when the cell information is not already known by the first control node, the cell information including a set of cell information parameters characterizing a specified cell served by a base station controlled by the second control node;

sending a request message from the first control node to the second control node;

including in the request message an index which is representative of the cell information deemed current by the first control node for the specified cell; and

~~The method of claim 9,~~ wherein the index is of a shorter length than the cell information.

11. (Currently Amended) For use in a radio access network having a first control node which controls a first set of base stations and a second control node which controls a second set of base stations, each base station serving a cell, a method comprising:

transmitting cell information from the second control node to the first control node only when the cell information is not already known by the first control node, the cell information including a set of cell information parameters characterizing a specified cell served by a base station controlled by the second control node;

sending a request message from the first control node to the second control node;

including in the request message an index which is representative of the cell information deemed current by the first control node for the specified cell; and

~~The method of claim 9, further comprising~~ forming the index as a counter whose value is changed when configuration data of the specified cell is changed.

12. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 910, further comprising:

(1) determining whether the index included in the request message represents cell information which is deemed current by the second control node;

(2) sending a response message from the second control node to the first control node; and

(3) if the determination of step (1) is negative, including in the response message the cell information deemed current by the second control node for the specified cell.

13. (Cancelled) The method of claim 12, further comprising including in the response message an index which is representative of the cell information deemed current by the second control node for the specified cell.

14. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 910, further comprising:

determining from a cell identifier for the specified cell whether the specified cell is a valid cell;

sending a response message from the second control node to the first control node; and

further comprising including in the response message an indication that the specified cell is not a valid cell.

15. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 910, wherein the request message requests that the second control node allocate resources in the specified cell for a connection controlled by the first control node.

16. (Original) The method of claim 15, wherein the request message is one of a radio link setup request message and a radio link addition request message.

17. (Cancelled) The method of claim 9, wherein the request message requests retrieval of cell information for the specified cell from the second control node.

18. (Currently Amended) For use in a radio access network having a first control node which controls a first set of base stations and a second control node which controls a second set of base stations, each base station serving a cell, a method comprising transmitting cell information from the second control node to the first control node only when the cell information is not already known by the first control node, the cell information including a set of cell information parameters characterizing a specified cell served by a base station controlled by the second control node;

~~The method of claim 1,~~ wherein the cell information includes a set of cell information parameters which characterizes the specified cell and a set of cell information parameters which characterizes at least one neighboring cell, the neighboring cell being adjacent to the specified cell.

19. (Original) The method of claim 18, further comprising:

sending a request message from the first control node to the second control node; and

including in the request message an index which is representative of the cell information deemed current by the first control node for the specified cell and a neighbor index which is representative of the cell information deemed current by the first control node for the neighboring cell.

20. (Original) The method of claim 19, wherein the neighbor index is of a shorter length than the cell information for the neighboring cell.

21. (Original) The method of claim 19, further comprising forming the neighbor index as a counter whose value is changed when configuration data of the neighboring cell is changed.

22. (Original) The method of claim 19, further comprising:

(1) determining whether the index included in the request message represents cell information which is deemed current by the second control node;

(2) determining whether the neighbor index included in the request message represents cell information which is deemed current by the second control node for the neighboring cell;

(3) sending a response message from the second control node to the first control node;

(4) if the determination of step (1) is negative, including in the response message the cell information deemed current by the second control node for the specified cell.

(5) if the determination of step (2) is negative, including in the response message the cell information deemed current by the second control node for the neighboring cell.

23. (Original) The method of claim 22, further comprising including in the response message a neighboring index which is representative of the cell information deemed current by the second control node for the neighboring cell.

24. (Original) The method of claim 19, further comprising:

determining from a cell identifier for the neighboring cell whether the neighboring cell is a valid cell;

sending a response message from the second control node to the first control node; and

further comprising including in the response message an indication that the neighboring cell is not a valid cell.

25. (Original) The method of claim 19, wherein the request message requests that the second control node allocate resources in the specified cell for a connection controlled by the first control node.

26. (Original) The method of claim 25, wherein the request message is one of a radio link setup request message and a radio link addition request message.

27. (Cancelled) A telecommunications network comprising:

a radio access network having a first control node and a second control node, each of the first control node and the second control node controlling at least one base station;

a signaling link connecting the first control node and the second control node;

wherein the second control node transmits cell information from the second control node to the first control node over the signaling link only when the cell information is not already known by the first control node, the cell information including a set of cell information parameters characterizing a specified cell served by a base station controlled by the second control node.

28. (Cancelled) The apparatus of claim 27, wherein the first control node sends a request message to the second control node, the request message including a cell

identifier for the specified cell, and wherein the second control node sends a response message to the first control node, the response message including both (1) the cell information deemed current by the second control node for the specified cell; and (2) an index which is representative of the cell information deemed current by the second control node for the specified cell.

29. (Currently Amended) A telecommunications network comprising:

a radio access network having a first control node and a second control node, each of the first control node and the second control node controlling at least one base station;

a signaling link connecting the first control node and the second control node;

wherein the second control node transmits cell information from the second control node to the first control node over the signaling link only when the cell information is not already known by the first control node, the cell information including a set of cell information parameters characterizing a specified cell served by a base station controlled by the second control node;

wherein the first control node sends a request message to the second control node, the request message including a cell identifier for the specified cell, and wherein the second control node sends a response message to the first control node, the response message including both (1) the cell information deemed current by the second control node for the specified cell; and (2) an index which is representative of the cell information deemed current by the second control node for the specified cell; and

~~The apparatus of claim 28,~~ wherein the index is of a shorter length than the cell information.

30. (Currently Amended) A telecommunications network comprising:

a radio access network having a first control node and a second control node, each of the first control node and the second control node controlling at least one base station;

a signaling link connecting the first control node and the second control node;

wherein the second control node transmits cell information from the second control node to the first control node over the signaling link only when the cell information is not already known by the first control node, the cell information including

a set of cell information parameters characterizing a specified cell served by a base station controlled by the second control node;

wherein the first control node sends a request message to the second control node, the request message including a cell identifier for the specified cell, and wherein the second control node sends a response message to the first control node, the response message including both (1) the cell information deemed current by the second control node for the specified cell; and (2) an index which is representative of the cell information deemed current by the second control node for the specified cell; and

~~The apparatus of claim 28,~~ wherein the index is a counter whose value is changed when configuration data of the specified cell is changed.

31. (Currently Amended) The apparatus of claim ~~28~~29, wherein the second control node determines from a cell identifier for the specified cell whether the specified cell is a valid cell and sends a response message from the second control node to the first control node; including in the response message an indication that the specified cell is not a valid cell.

32. (Currently Amended) The apparatus of claim ~~28~~29, wherein the request message requests that the second control node allocate resources in the specified cell for a connection controlled by the first control node.

33. (Original) The apparatus of claim 32, wherein the request message is one of a radio link setup request message and a radio link addition request message.

34. (Cancelled) The apparatus of claim 28, wherein the request message requests retrieval of cell information for the specified cell from the second control node.

35. (Cancelled) The apparatus of claim 27, wherein the first control node sends a request message to the second control node and includes in the request message an index which is representative of the cell information deemed current by the first control node for the specified cell.

36. (Currently Amended) A telecommunications network comprising:

a radio access network having a first control node and a second control node, each of the first control node and the second control node controlling at least one base station;

a signaling link connecting the first control node and the second control node;

wherein the second control node transmits cell information from the second control node to the first control node over the signaling link only when the cell information is not already known by the first control node, the cell information including a set of cell information parameters characterizing a specified cell served by a base station controlled by the second control node;

wherein the first control node sends a request message to the second control node and includes in the request message an index which is representative of the cell information deemed current by the first control node for the specified cell; and

~~The apparatus of claim 35,~~ wherein the index is of a shorter length than the cell information.

37. (Currently Amended) A telecommunications network comprising:

a radio access network having a first control node and a second control node, each of the first control node and the second control node controlling at least one base station;

a signaling link connecting the first control node and the second control node;

wherein the second control node transmits cell information from the second control node to the first control node over the signaling link only when the cell information is not already known by the first control node, the cell information including a set of cell information parameters characterizing a specified cell served by a base station controlled by the second control node;

wherein the first control node sends a request message to the second control node and includes in the request message an index which is representative of the cell information deemed current by the first control node for the specified cell; and

~~The apparatus of claim 35,~~ wherein the index is a counter whose value is changed when configuration data of the specified cell is changed.

38. (Currently Amended) The apparatus of claim ~~35~~36, wherein the second control node determines whether the index included in the request message represents

cell information which is deemed current by the second control node and, in the event of a negative determination, includes in a response message sent to the first control node the cell information deemed current by the second control node for the specified cell.

39. (Cancelled) The apparatus of claim 38, wherein the response message includes an index which is representative of the cell information deemed current by the second control node for the specified cell.

40. (Currently Amended) The apparatus of claim ~~35~~36, wherein the second control node determines from a cell identifier for the specified cell whether the specified cell is a valid cell, in the event of an affirmative determination, includes in a response message sent to the first control cell an indication that the specified cell is not a valid cell.

41. (Currently Amended) The apparatus of claim ~~35~~36, wherein the request message requests that the second control node allocate resources in the specified cell for a connection controlled by the first control node.

42. (Original) The apparatus of claim 41, wherein the request message is one of a radio link setup request message and a radio link addition request message.

43. (Cancelled) The apparatus of claim 35, wherein the request message requests retrieval of cell information for the specified cell from the second control node.

44. (Currently Amended) A telecommunications network comprising:

a radio access network having a first control node and a second control node, each of the first control node and the second control node controlling at least one base station;

a signaling link connecting the first control node and the second control node;

wherein the second control node transmits cell information from the second control node to the first control node over the signaling link only when the cell information is not already known by the first control node, the cell information including a set of cell information parameters characterizing a specified cell served by a base station controlled by the second control node;

wherein the first control node sends a request message to the second control node, the request message including a cell identifier for the specified cell, and wherein the second control node sends a response message to the first control node, the response message including both (1) the cell information deemed current by the second control node for the specified cell; and (2) an index which is representative of the cell information deemed current by the second control node for the specified cell; and

~~The apparatus of claim 28,~~ wherein the cell information includes a set of cell information parameters which characterizes the specified cell and a set of cell information parameters which characterizes at least one neighboring cell, the neighboring cell being adjacent to the specified cell.

45. (Currently Amended) The apparatus of claim 44, wherein the ~~first control node sends a~~ request message ~~to the second control node and~~ includes ~~in the request message an index which is representative of the cell information deemed current by the first control node for the specified cell and~~ a neighbor index which is representative of the cell information deemed current by the first control node for the neighboring cell.

46. (Original) The apparatus of claim 45, wherein the neighbor index is of a shorter length than the cell information for the neighboring cell.

47. (Original) The apparatus of claim 45, wherein the neighbor index is a counter whose value is changed when configuration data of the neighboring cell is changed.

48. (Original) The apparatus of claim 45, wherein the second control node determines from a cell identifier for the neighboring cell whether the neighboring cell is a valid cell and, in the event of an affirmative determination, includes in a response message sent to the first control node an indication that the neighboring cell is not a valid cell.

49. (Original) The apparatus of claim 45, wherein the request message requests that the second control node allocate resources in the specified cell for a connection controlled by the first control node.

50. (Original) The apparatus of claim 49, wherein the request message is one of a radio link setup request message and a radio link addition request message.

51. (Currently Amended) The apparatus of claim ~~27~~29, wherein the first control node and the second control node are both radio network control nodes.

52. (Currently Amended) The apparatus of claim 51, wherein the first control node is a Serving Radio Network Control (SRNC) node and the second control node is a Drift Radio Network Control (DRNC).

53. (New) The method of claim 5, further comprising:

determining from a cell identifier for the specified cell whether the specified cell is a valid cell; and

further comprising including in the response message an indication that the specified cell is not a valid cell.

54. (New) The method of claim 5, wherein the request message requests that the second control node allocate resources in the specified cell for a connection controlled by the first control node.

55. (New) The method of claim 11, further comprising:

(1) determining whether the index included in the request message represents cell information which is deemed current by the second control node;

(2) sending a response message from the second control node to the first control node; and

(3) if the determination of step (1) is negative, including in the response message the cell information deemed current by the second control node for the specified cell.

56. (New) The method of claim 11, further comprising:

determining from a cell identifier for the specified cell whether the specified cell is a valid cell;

sending a response message from the second control node to the first control node; and

further comprising including in the response message an indication that the specified cell is not a valid cell.

57. (New) The method of claim 11, wherein the request message requests that the second control node allocate resources in the specified cell for a connection controlled by the first control node.

58. (New) The apparatus of claim 30, wherein the second control node determines from a cell identifier for the specified cell whether the specified cell is a valid cell and sends a response message from the second control node to the first control node; including in the response message an indication that the specified cell is not a valid cell.

59. (New) The apparatus of claim 30, wherein the request message requests that the second control node allocate resources in the specified cell for a connection controlled by the first control node.

60. (New) The apparatus of claim 37, wherein the second control node determines whether the index included in the request message represents cell information which is deemed current by the second control node and, in the event of a negative determination, includes in a response message sent to the first control node the cell information deemed current by the second control node for the specified cell.

61. (New) The apparatus of claim 37, wherein the second control node determines from a cell identifier for the specified cell whether the specified cell is a valid cell, in the

event of an affirmative determination, includes in a response message sent to the first control cell an indication that the specified cell is not a valid cell.

62. (New) The apparatus of claim 37, wherein the request message requests that the second control node allocate resources in the specified cell for a connection controlled by the first control node.

63. (New) The apparatus of claim 30, wherein the first control node and the second control node are both radio network control nodes.

64. (New) The apparatus of claim 63, wherein the first control node is a Serving Radio Network Control (SRNC) node and the second control node is a Drift Radio Network Control (DRNC).